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Aspect of social discourse retrospection

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Abstract

The cause and value of retrospection of social discourse in the context of the constitution of social models and social norms of the present is considered. It is also assumed that the retrospection draws our attention, figuratively speaking, to previously missed opportunities. And it happens (the retrospective analysis may indicate problematic reasoning steps) due to the fact that at the time of this analysis the problems, specified by us, have already been resolved and removed from the agenda in the absence of the possibility of their perspective analysis and solution. Consequently, retrospection conditionality of factual statements' novelty is determined for us again (if the situation arises) arising relevance of the earlier implicit structure. Retrospection draws our attention, figuratively speaking, to previously missed opportunities. Mobility of social discourse is due to the nature of discursive model. Since the discourse is defined by intersubjective communication processes aimed at the possibility of understanding, it is possible to assume that interpretative mobility of a social discourse is caused by the nature of the discursive model, the main objective of which is an understanding and structuring of social reality in a certain way, i.e., by one or another aspect of vision.

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1. Introduction

The understanding of novelty of “factual statement” (I. Lakatos) in a retrospection, certainly, requires justification and a new aspect of vision (well-known to us before this fact). Let us try to outline briefly the principles of this retrospection. Perhaps, in this case, it is necessary to decide at once, on how and why we, in principle, fix (highlight) and understand the novelty of “factual statement”.

Firstly, conceptual frameworks of discourses (as simulacra) are modeled, first of all, through our *already* existing ideas associated with the actualization of specific presuppositions and the activation of specific concepts, and, hence, the factual statements in this case do not present any novelty. In other words, the constitution of the conceptual framework provided by a tool such as the current *at this stage is* factual statement for us. (Thereat: this factual

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statement may be the only element of the set of possible statements, representation of which (other elements of the set) can be totally unacceptable within a particular conceptual framework; probably, in this case, according to I. Lakatos, and there comes a regressive state of research programs).

Secondly, “Until now, we have assumed that we can directly determine, whether the new theory predicts new facts or not. *However, the novelty of the factual statements often becomes apparent only after a long time*” (Lakatos, 2003, p. 111) and “New research program ... can start with a new explanation of the “old” facts” (Lakatos, 2003, p. 112). Therefore, the definition of the novelty of factual statements possibly is due to the update of new (at this time developed) meanings / values of previously known concept. The latter occurs, most likely, due to awareness of mismatch between the existing conceptual framework program and new, perhaps, not quite well articulated (our) ideas. The next step of “matching” of the contradictions, detected now, will attempt to retrospectively determine the degree of compliance / non-compliance of the concept and conceptual framework, actual then, which represents it. Finally, this leads at least to the statement of the available gaps, or, at most, to the statement of regressive doom of this theory (examples given by I. Lakatos, imply the prospect of just only initial statement).

Thus, retrospection draws our attention, figuratively speaking, to previously missed opportunities. And it happens (the retrospective analysis may indicate problematic reasoning steps) due to the fact that by the time of the analysis the problems specified by us have already been resolved and removed from the agenda in the absence of the possibility of their perspective solution. Of course, retrospection is caused by the nature of discourse.

2. Review of related research

In this regard the following conclusion of U. Eco represents a great interest: “There should be a possibility (and it really exists) that, substituting D instead of A on the basis of metonymic relations, we will see that D has some *seme* contradicting to *seme* A, but nevertheless we can, as soon as D is substituted instead of A, formulate metasemiotic statement A = not D” (Eco, 2005, p. 152).

It is assumed that retrospection draws our attention, figuratively speaking, to previously missed opportunities. And it happens (retrospective analysis may indicate problematic reasoning steps) due to the fact that at the time of this analysis the specified problems have already been resolved and removed from the agenda in the absence of the possibility of their perspective solution. Consequently, retrospective conditionality of factual statements’ novelty is determined for us again (if the situation arises) revealing the relevance of the earlier implicit structure (Goncharenko M., 2014).

Therefore, in order to determine if retrospective influences the perception of social discourse, we need to clarify what constitutes a social discourse and on what actually its understanding / interpretation depends. For this purpose we shall use the reasoning about the social discourse, expressed by I.T. Kasavin: “Discourse - is not purely epistemological. On the contrary, its characteristic feature is an essential political, social and moral loading. The main purpose of the discourse is nothing other than coordination of activities of people in the society. The means of achieving this goal appear to be the change of mental states of the recipient: his knowledge, estimates and values, volitional impulses” (Kasavin). As these signs are important in terms of defining objectives, role and importance of discourse (and social discourse in particular), so long our analysis of retrospective *opportunities* of discourse will be focused on them. In order to demonstrate what that means we will review the following example: the First World War from the point of view of social discourse of the Bolshevist Russia and from the point of view of the modern Russia. As you know, the Bolshevist government marked the signing of the Peace of Brest as their way out of the war (Brest Peace - an international peace treaty signed in 1918 between the representatives of Soviet Russia and the Central Powers, which marked the defeat and withdrawal of Russia from the First World War), after that the oddity of their actions (recognition of Russia as a winner) was explained in the following way: this war –is an imperialist war, therefore, unfair to *ordinary* people, who will continue to wage a just war in the form of so-called world revolution, during which the worker-peasant army, in fact consisting of the same representatives (soldiers of peasant origin), declared by the defeated party, will establish a new social order with their oppressed brothers peasant proletarians of all countries, taking away the old benefits and privileges from their traditional oppressors - the national bourgeoisie. That is, the actually provided argumentation appeals to the current ideas of *internationalism* and social justice at that stage in the world. We will consider the situation, which is actually resulted from it, after the analysis of the interpretation of the events of the modern Russia. So, on the occasion of the centenary of beginning of the First World

War, Russia has revised not only the results and consequences of this war, but also concentrated its *efforts* towards the transformation of social discourse, aimed at identifying the causes that led to such sad events for Russia: the actual loss of significant areas, almost millions of victims, collapsed socio-political system with all its consequences. It is important to note here that the first version of the interpretation of social discourse became possible in the socio-political and ideological paradigm of the proletarian revolutionism and proletarian international unity, actual for the Russia of that period. The second (today's) version of the interpretation of social discourse is structured by new concepts and ideologemes, actual, respectively, for contemporaries: national interests, civilizational unity, pragmatism, etc. Therefore, from the above-mentioned example it is possible to see the significant role of the concepts for the transformation of social discourse, which in fact articulate social reality. Indeed, these social discourses, figuratively speaking, are quite different from each other, but no one on this basis cannot deny the fact that the country (Russia), and the event (The First World War), presented by them, do not possess identity in relation to themselves respectively. Therefore, we can say that an infinite set of discourse variation is caused, first of all, by the fact of a concrete event, that is, the fact of a particular discourse, the basic principles of which constitution a priori *provide* the possibility of variation. In other words, the transformation of the discourse is valid only if there is a discourse, the generating factor of which is a certain fact. In the case of the example given above, such fact is the country "Russia" and the event "The First World War".

If we consider the methodology of the research of analytic philosophy of this problem, it should be noted that this analysis assumes any social discourse, as well as any social institution is the expression of one or another intention (Wittgenstein, 1994). K-O. Apel argues concerning this state of affairs as follows: "The relationships [...] between, on the one hand, the value-free objectivism of science, and on the other - the existential subjectivism of religious acts of faith and ethical decisions, appear as [...] the separation between the public and private areas of life, formed due to the separation of Church and state. [...] Western liberalism ever more began to ascribe the binding nature of religious faith [...] and moral norms to the context of private decisions of conscience [...]. Presently, this process is still going on, which is expressed by, for example, withdrawal of moral arguments and principles from the foundations of law" (Apel, 2001, p. 273-274). Therefore, an example of withdrawal of the moral principles from a legal sphere - is an example of the transformation of social discourse as a result of the transformation of social reality. In fact, this process - is a representation of an intention by means of the constitution of the social institution (of the law) in one way or another.

In view of the fact that was stated above regarding the *relationship* of discourse and reality (changing the aspect of vision), the particular importance of bases and methods of interpretation, which is an integral part of the same discourse, should be emphasized. For example, Paul Feyerabend, describing the scientific discussions of the middle of the twentieth century, draws attention to the similarity between modern and medieval science, which, in his opinion, is psychologically conditioned: "It made opponents silent and saved the second interpretation. This happened by no means because of the fact that the proof of Von Neumann was well known, but due to the authority of "Von Neumann" name, which eliminated any objections. The second interpretation was protected by power of reputable *hearing*. In this case, the similarity between the "modern" science and the middle ages is simply screaming out. Who does not remember how objections were set aside by means of the references to Aristotle? Similarity increases even more, when we get to know, how scientific institutions tried to impose their will on the whole of society" (Feyerabend, 2009, p. 134-135). However, the psychological conditioning of science, according to Paul Feyerabend, can be represented in the form of what we mean when we use a combination of "scientific reality" or "science". The reason why we turned to the example of Paul Feyerabend regarding scientific discourse is explained by the fact that the science - is one of the social institutions, beyond which the social discourse (at least, since Ancient Greece) does not exist. All this implies that the social discourse, which is an integral part of the scientific discourse, suggesting a multiplicity of interpretations, being constituted by one or other concepts, by definition allows its own *modification*, which appears to its *duration*. The phenomenon of social discourse is its duration, that is, any social discourse (as well as scientific) is actual until there is a need in its interpretation / re-interpretation, when a discourse loses its relevance, it becomes a part of the historical knowledge, which does not eliminate its possible retrospective analysis from the point of view of a discourse, as in the case of the above-mentioned example of the interpretation of the First World War. Approximately, in the same way K. Popper argues concerning education problems 2 out of problem 1: "[...] we start with the problem, which can be both practical and theoretical. To solve it, we propose a test theory: this is our

trial solution. Then we test the theory, trying to refute it: it is a critical method to eliminate errors. As a result, we have a new problem [...] (or perhaps a few new problems)” (Popper, 2008, p. 27). In other words, interpreting a certain state of things, we certainly obtain a new state of things, which, by definition, requires new interpretations, as it represents a new specific problem.

And still, in order to more clearly define the specifics of retrospection of social discourse, and, consequently, the social discourse itself, we will address to the reasoning of the famous Russian historian and ethnographer L.N. Gumilev concerning the interpretation of historical discourse (or the discourse of historical knowledge), relating to the ancient and modern ethnography: “Ammianus Marcellinus was, perhaps, the most brilliant historian of his time. He wrote about the Huns at the end of the IV, and, judging by the tone, he did not like them. He hardly saw them, as our author died in 400, and the Huns reached the borders of the empire later [...]. Ammianus Marcellinus was misled by his informant, whose information he accepted uncritically. After all, in fact S.I. Rudenko (S.I. Rudenko – a famous archaeologist, ethnographer, historian, researcher of the cultures of the Huns, Altai and others peoples of Central Asia, to whose work (“Culture of the Huns and Noinulin mounds”) L.N. Gumilev refers) said the same about the nomads, but with a sensible analysis of the special, unusual system of life, treating the people, who are able to live in their own way, with respect.” (Gumilev, 2002, p. 138-139, 143). From this it follows that a retrospective analysis of the historical and social discourse, conducted by S.I. Rudenko, relied on those factual statements that were, for some reasons, not available to Ammianus Marcellinus, but which significantly changed the aspect of the vision of the historical and social discourse of the ancient Huns. However, this does not mean that all possible retrospections, including a retrospective analysis of S.I. Rudenko, somehow *changed* the life of the ancient Huns. The main thing is that the discourse of the ancient Huns’ life predetermined the set of interpretive models, each of which is retrospective, regarding it from a position of time. In this connection, it is appropriate to use the term “interpretive discourse”, which function, according to I.T. Kasavin, is determined by creation of ideal structures, correlating the world and semiotic system in a certain way (Kasavin). Thus, the following assumption, concerning interpretation of a literary text V.N. Goncharenko, seems quite interesting in this connection: “[...] a key role in the process of “re-interpretation” of the artwork is played by a dominant culture: external and internal one” (Goncharenko V., 2014, p. 68).

3. Conclusion

The fact that the actual social reality, considering the phenomenology of retentively-potential continuum that interprets the consciousness, is always historical, and everything that becomes comprehensible to understanding is always updated with the help of particular cultural and historical dominants, which are relevant here and now.

Thus, following the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, consisting in the fact that discourse is defined by intersubjective communication processes striving for mutual understanding (Habermas, 1983), we can assume that the interpretive *mobility* of the social discourse is caused by the nature of the discursive model itself, the main objective of which is an understanding and structuring social reality in a certain way, i.e., by one or another aspect of vision.

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